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NEWS RELEASE

Office of News and Publications
Missoula, MT 59812
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June 27, 1991

MEETING AT UM RESULTS IN CREATION OF INDIAN SUPREME COURT

MISSOULA --

The Montana-Wyoming Tribal Court Judges Association created an Indian supreme court for the two states during a June 20 meeting at The University of Montana.

Traditionally, tribal cases have been heard in trial and appellate courts. Now, tribes will have the option of using those two types of courts as well as the new Montana-Wyoming Indian Supreme Court or substituting the supreme court for the appellate one.

The association, an organization of all tribal court judges in Montana and Wyoming, was founded in 1986 to further the professional development of tribal court judges and improve tribal court systems in the region. Since fall 1988, the group has worked with the UM School of Law's Indian Law Clinic to establish the supreme court.

This summer, the association will contact each tribal council to learn whether and how it wishes to use the supreme court. The court can begin accepting cases as soon as the tribes determine their level of participation.

"This is the beginning of a unique experience in Indian law which will strengthen tribal sovereignty," says John St. Clair, the newly elected association president and chief judge of the Shoshone and Arapaho Tribal Court.

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Law school/csw

Local, dailies, tribal papers; Casper, Riverton + Lander, WY, papers
Supreme.rl